



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, NEIGHBORHOODS, AND STRATEGIC PLANNING DEPARTMENT

M E M O R A N D U M

DATE: May 2, 2007

TO: Ray Giometti, Planning Commission Chair
Members of the Planning Commission

FROM: Rebecca Lind, Long Range Planning Manager

SUBJECT: **Briefing on land use and zoning designation of the Benson Hill commercial area**

Issue Statements

- What is the appropriate land use designation for the Benson Hill Shopping Center commercial area?
- What is the appropriate rezoning classification for the Benson Hill Shopping Center commercial area?

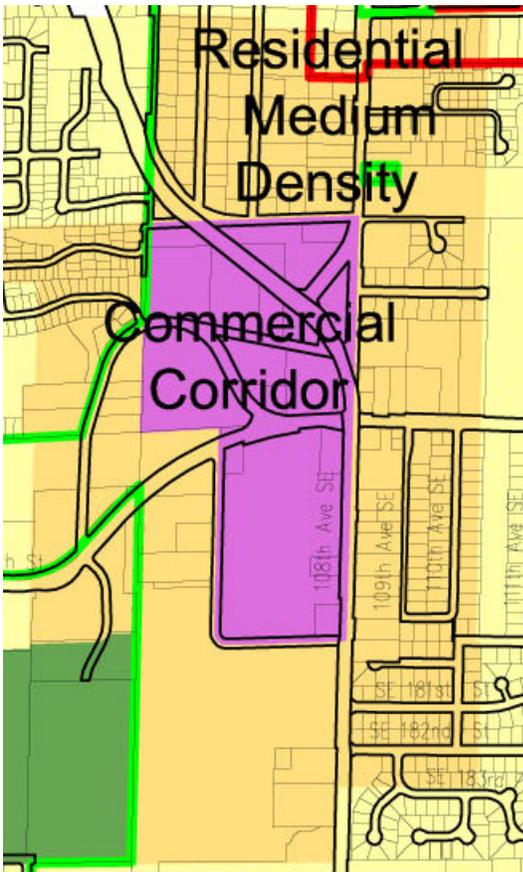
Background

The Benson Hill Shopping Center commercial area is anchored by the big box Fred Meyer building, offering one-stop grocery, home and garden, and clothing shopping. Surrounding the Fred Meyer are smaller shops, services, and restaurants, ranging from small local businesses to national chains. Physically, the commercial area is oriented in a strip on both sides of 108th Avenue SE/Benson Highway with a couple blocks of strip development along Carr Road/Petrovitsky Road at that intersection. Access to the commercial area is primarily auto-oriented, as the shopping center draws local traffic as well as traffic en route to Renton, Fairwood, and Kent. Despite its auto-orientation, pedestrians are a common sight in this area. Bus routes run along the Petrovitsky Corridor, as well as along 108th Avenue connecting to Renton, Fairwood, Kent, and Tukwila. Multi-family, single-family, and mobile home park residential uses surround the commercial area.

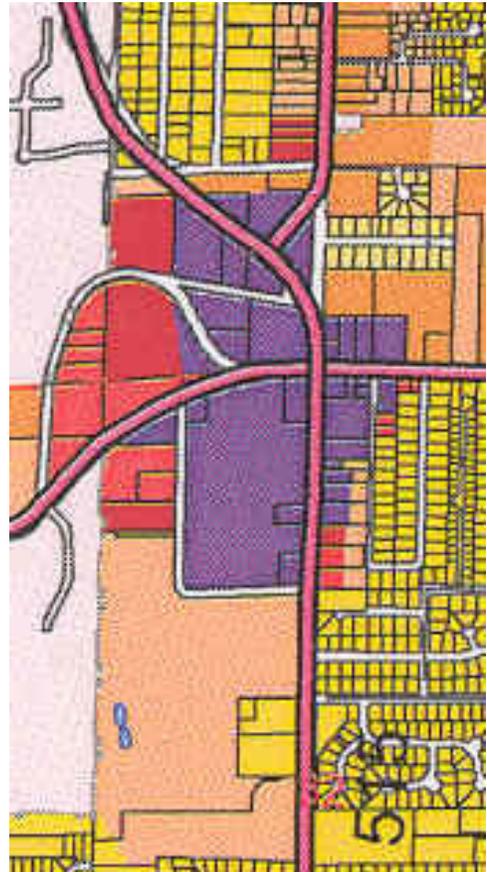
King County zoning of the Shopping Center and surrounding area shows a number of zoning classifications. The majority of the commercial area is zoned Commercial Business (CB), although there are a couple parcels zoned Office (O) in the southern portion of the business district, east of 108th Avenue SE. Residential development around the commercial area ranges from Residential-8 units per acre (R-8) to Residential-48 units per acre (R-48).



Figure 1
Aerial Photo of the Benson Hill Shopping Center commercial area and surrounding residential development.



← **Figure 2**
Renton Comp. Plan Land Use Designation for the Benson Hill Shopping Center and surrounding residential area.
Figure 3 →
King County Zoning Map for the Benson Hill Shopping Center and surrounding residential area.



Analysis

It is important to evaluate the future zoning of this area based upon the existing character of the shopping area, as well as any future plans for growth and development. At the current time, the Shopping Center is designated for Commercial Corridor (CC) land use in the Renton Comprehensive Plan and the surrounding residential areas are designated Residential Medium Density (RMD). Possible zoning classifications under the CC designation include Commercial Office (CO), Commercial Arterial (CA), and Light Industrial (I-L). Residential zoning classifications under the RMD designation would include Residential-10 units per net acre (R-10) or Residential-14 units per net acre (R-14). Another possibility for this area may be a Center Village (CV) land use designation over the commercial area and the higher density residential areas that surround it. This would allow a possible zoning classification of Center Village (CV), which is a mixed use commercial and residential zone; one of the Residential Multi-Family zones (RMF, RM-U, or RM-T); or R-14 zoning which is a mix of single-family and small scale multi-family uses.

The purpose statement of the CC land use designation fits the existing conditions of this commercial area very closely. Commercial Corridors are areas with a pre-existing, linear commercial district along an arterial that provides daily goods and services for the local neighborhood and surrounding areas. Over time, the purpose of this designation is to transform these districts from purely auto-oriented strips into vibrant districts with coordinated site planning, efficient parking, pedestrian amenities, boulevard treatments, and transit access. CA zoning allows the wide variety of uses already in place in this commercial center, and the development standards are similar to those already in place as well. It allows limited residential uses in the commercial area, but is not a truly mixed use zone. Other commercial areas in the CC land use designation and CA zone have designated business districts, with policies in place to guide future development and redevelopment in line with the Comprehensive Plan. Business District policies help to tailor the growth and development of an area to meet the needs of the community. Some Districts have policies primarily on design or quality development, others on pedestrian orientation, or perhaps the mix of businesses to serve the surrounding area. A set of policies for the Benson Hill Business District could be written to guide future development in this area based upon the identified needs and future vision of the community.

Designation as part of the CV land use district would be a much bolder step for this area. While the purpose of the CV anticipates this typically suburban environment, of a shopping center surrounded by residential development, it views this pattern of development as ripe for redevelopment into a growth center. CV land use designation is designed to transform underutilized suburban areas into mixed use urban centers of compact development, oriented around transit and pedestrian circulation. CV zoning is truly a mixed use zone that would allow the current mix of uses, but would also allow high density residential development over business uses and within the commercial district. Surrounding residential development would be zoned for either multi-family or R-14, which is consistent with the existing King County zoning, but would be included in the Center Village land use designation, and thus, also included in the compact urban concept.

While the current character of the Benson Hill commercial area meets the conditions for either CC land use designation or CV land use designation, the real issue is the vision for future growth

in this area. If the vision for this area is more of the same type of development, perhaps enhanced a bit to accommodate some better design standards, coordinated site planning, and better pedestrian access, then the area should be designated CC, with CA zoning and a business district overlay. If the vision for this area is to transform it into a compact urban center with a mixed commercial and residential core, surrounded by medium intensity residential development, then a CV land use designation is appropriate with CV zoning covering the existing commercial areas, multi-family zoning on the existing multi-family developments, and R-14 zoning in the other surrounding residential areas.